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### Montana Committee for the Humanities, UM celebrate 20 years together

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# The University of Montana

## NEWS RELEASE

Office of News and Publications  
Missoula, MT 59812  
(406) 243-2522

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Nov. 26, 1991

### MONTANA COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMANITIES, UM CELEBRATE 20 YEARS TOGETHER

#### MISSOULA --

The Montana Committee for the Humanities and The University of Montana will celebrate two decades of cooperative effort with a free public program Thursday, Dec. 5.

The committee, housed at UM since its inception, is marking its 20th anniversary with a campus event to thank the University for its cooperation and commitment to public humanities programs, MCH Executive Director Margaret Kingsland said. And UM President George Dennison will mark the occasion by presenting Kingsland with an honorary doctorate of humane letters.

The program is scheduled from 3:30 to 5 p.m. in UM's Music Recital Hall, followed by a reception honoring Kingsland in the Presidents Room of Brantly Hall.

As the committee's executive director since 1974, Kingsland was instrumental in creating a state humanities program that has become a national model, Dennison said. Her strengths as an administrator and an inspirational leader have won the admiration of colleagues throughout the state, he said, citing her organizational genius, commitment to quality and uncanny ability to motivate others.

"In Montana, Dr. Kingsland has befriended and assisted all humanists whatever their leanings or locations," Dennison said. "Her

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diligence and energy has meant that her work has markedly influenced the lives of virtually all 800,000 Montanans."

Kingsland holds master's and doctoral degrees in English literature from the University of Connecticut, and a bachelor's degree in American literature from Pembroke College in Brown University.

Since 1972, MCH has awarded more than \$4 million in grants to non-profit organizations serving all areas of the state. Those organizations have matched the committee's grants dollar for dollar, Kingsland said, bringing a total of \$8 million in public cultural programs to communities throughout the state. MCH is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, a grant from Montana's cultural trust and private donations.

The goal of the 19-member committee is to promote public awareness, use and appreciation of the humanities by providing informational programs and public forums, Kingsland said.

"The citizens of a democracy urgently need opportunities to think critically, debate and analyze information in public forums," she said. "MCH is the single most important source of funds in Montana to promote public humanities debate."

The committee operates a speakers bureau that extends to the far reaches of the state, fostering discussion of timely issues such as Montana and the media, Native American value systems and the Persian Gulf war. The MCH Book Group contributes multiple copies of books on a specific theme to local communities, then provides an informed



speaker to lead a discussion on the theme.

MCH seminars, lectures, films and video productions provide an informal continuing education program for adults, she said, with particular emphasis on reaching the state's small rural communities and Native American reservations. In addition, the committee helped bankroll the Montana literary anthology "The Last Best Place" and honors outstanding citizens and scholars each year with Montana Awards in the Humanities.

The academic year 1991-92 is the committee's 20th, and the Dec. 5 celebration of that anniversary will reflect on the programs and events of the past two decades. The program will begin with a brief history of the committee and its relationship to UM by MCH Chair John Opitz, a Helena physician. UM English Professor Bill Bevis will discuss regionalism, Kingsland will reflect on her years crisscrossing Montana for the committee, and 26 area citizens and organizations will receive MCH certificates of appreciation.

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